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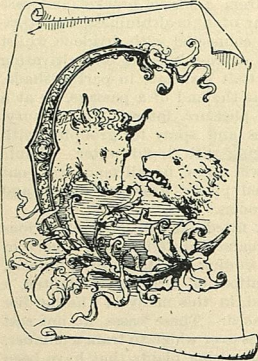
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

IMPORTANCE OF PATTERN IN CARPET-WEAVING.

BY WILLIAM MORRIS.



CARPET-WEAVING is somewhat of the nature of tapestry; it also is wholly unmechanical, but its use as a floorcloth somewhat degrades it, especially in our northern or western countries, where people come out of the muddy streets into rooms without taking off their shoes. Carpet-weaving undoubtedly arose among people living a tent life, and for such a dwelling as a tent, carpets are the best possible ornaments.

Carpets form a mosaic of small squares of worsted, or hair, or silk threads, tied into a coarse canvas, which is made as the work progresses. Owing to the comparative coarseness of the work, the designs should always be very elementary in form, and suggestive merely of forms of leafage, flowers, beasts and birds, etc. The soft gradations of tint to which tapestry lends itself are unfit for carpet weaving; beauty and variety of color must be attained by harmonious juxtaposition of tints, bounded by judiciously chosen outlines; and the pattern should lie absolutely flat upon the ground. On the whole, in designing carpets the method of contrast is the best one to employ, and blue and red quite frankly used, are the main colors on which the designer should depend.

In making the above remarks I have been only thinking of the genuine or hand-made carpets. The mechanically-made carpets of to-day must be looked upon as make-shifts for cheapness sake. Of these, the velvet pile and Brussels are simply coarse worsted velvets woven over wires like other velvet, and cut, in the case of the velvet pile; and Kidderminster carpets are stout cloths, in which abundance of warp (a warp to each weft) is used for the sake of wear and tear. The velvet carpets need the same kind of design as to color and quality as the real carpets, only as the colors are necessarily limited in number, and the pattern must repeat at certain distances, the design should be simpler and smaller than in a real carpet. A Kidderminster carpet calls for a small design in which the different planes, or piles, as they are called, are well interlocked.

Mechanical weaving has to repeat the pattern on the cloth within comparatively narrow limits; the number of colors also is limited in most cases to four or five. In most cloths so woven, therefore, the best plan seems to be to choose a pleasant ground

color, and to superimpose a pattern mainly composed of either a lighter shade of that color, or a color in no very strong contrast to the ground; and then, if you are using several colors, to light up this general arrangement either with a more forcible outline, or by spots of stronger color carefully disposed. Often the lighter shade on the darker suffices, and hardly calls for anything else; some very beautiful cloths are merely damasks, in which the warp and weft are of the same color; but a different tone is obtained by the figure and the ground being woven with a longer or shorter twill; the tabby being tied by the warp very often, the satin much more rarely. In any case, the patterned webs produced by mechanical weaving, if the ornament is to be effective and worth the doing, require the same Gothic crispness and clearness of detail which has been spoken of before; the geometrical structure of the pattern, which is a necessity in all recurring patterns, should be boldly insisted upon, so as to draw the eye from accidental figures, which the recurrence of the pattern is apt to produce.

The meaningless stripes and spots and other tormentings of the simple twill of the web, which are so common in the woven ornament of the eighteenth century and in our own times, should be carefully avoided; all these things are the last resources of a jaded invention and a contempt of the simple and fresh beauty that comes of a sympathetic suggestion of natural forms; if the pattern be vigorously and firmly drawn with a true feeling for the beauty of line and *silhouette*, the play of light and shade on the material of the simple twill will give all the necessary variety. I invite my readers to make another comparison; to go to the South Kensington Museum and study the invaluable fragments of the stuffs of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of Syrian and Sicilian manufacture, or the almost equally beautiful webs of Persian design, which are later in date, but instinct with the purest and best Eastern feeling; they may also note the splendid stuffs produced mostly in Italy in the later Middle Ages, which are unsurpassed for richness and effect of design, and when they have impressed their minds with the productions of this great historic school, let them contrast with them the work of the Pompadour period, passing by the early eighteenth century as a period of transition into corruption.

The next method of ornamenting cloth is by painting it or printing on it with dyes. As to the painting of cloth with dyes by hand, which is no doubt a very old and widely-practised art, it has now quite disappeared; modern society not being rich enough to pay the necessary price for such work; and its place has now been taken by printing by block or cylinder machine. The remarks made on the design for mechanically woven cloths apply pretty much to these printed stuffs; only, in the first place, more play of delicate and pretty color is possible, and more variety of color also; and, in the second, much more use can be made of hatching and dotting, which are obviously suitable to the method of block-printing. In the many-colored printed cloths frank red and blue are the mainstays of the color arrangement.



THE SEASONS, BY ALFRED MIESSNER, OF VIENNA.